

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK MOTOR ROADS  
(Park Loop Road)  
Acadia National Park Roads & Bridges  
Bar Harbor Vicinity  
Hancock County  
Maine

HAER NO. ME-11

HAER  
ME  
5-BAHAY  
2-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

PHOTOGRAPHS

XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
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Department of the Interior  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

ACADIA MOTOR ROADS

HAER No. ME-11

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I. INTRODUCTION

LOCATION: Various locations in Acadia National Park on eastern half of Mound Desert Island, Hancock County, Maine.

Quads: Bar Harbor, Maine  
Hulls Cove, Maine  
Salisbury Cove, Maine  
Seal Harbor, Maine

DATES OF CONSTRUCTION: 1923-58

STRUCTURE TYPE: Scenic park highway system

ORIGINAL OWNERS: John D. Rockefeller, Jr.  
Lafayette/Acadia National Park, National Park Service

PRESENT OWNERS: Acadia National Park, National Park Service

SIGNIFICANCE: Motorists visiting Acadia National Park enjoy a variety of experiences on the park's acclaimed road system. The principal park road is the Park Loop Road, a 20-mile circuit around the eastern half of Mount Desert Island. The road provides visitors with access to the park's varied terrain, including the island's only sand beach, the tallest headlands on the nation's eastern coast, long narrow lakes or "ponds" scoured by glaciers in centuries past, and climbs the shoulder of the highest mountain (from which the Cadillac Mountain Road leads to the summit.) The motor roads were first proposed in the early 1920s by industrialist and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who at the time was constructing a major carriage road network on the island. Rockefeller sought to provide motorists with an

opportunity to visit the park without making demands to use his beloved carriage paths, and he funded several segments of the Park Loop Road, including the old "Mountain Road" along Eagle Lake and Jordan Pond, and the popular seaside sections, the Ocean Drive and Otter Cliffs segments. The road was completed in a collaborative effort between Rockefeller, the National Park Service, and the Bureau of Public Roads.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

The Acadia National Park Roads and Bridges Recording Project was conducted in 1994-95 by the Historic American Engineering Record. This is one is a series of reports prepared for the project. See HAER No. ME-56, PARADISE HILL ROAD, and HAER No. ME-58, CADILLAC MOUNTAIN ROAD, for reports on other Acadia National Park motor roads.

Neil Maher, Historian, 1994-97

The road is that physical sign by which you best understand any age or people . . . for the road is a creation of man and a type of civilized society.<sup>1</sup>

Horace Bushnell, 1864

I suppose that you appreciate the fact that well-built roads are the most durable works of man. They outlast all other structures and monuments.<sup>2</sup>

Charles W. Eliot to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1916

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Thomas J. Schlereth, *A Roadscape of the American Experience* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1985), 1.

<sup>2</sup>Charles W. Eliot to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 30 September 1916, folder 1080, box 109, record group 2, Homes-Seal Harbor (hereafter RG 2), Office of Messrs. Rockefeller (hereafter OMR), Rockefeller Family Archives (hereafter RFA), Rockefeller Archive Center (hereafter RAC), Tarrytown, New York.

## INTRODUCTION

Beneath a cloudy summer sky on 23 July 1932, hundreds of hardy citizens gathered atop Cadillac Mountain in Maine's Acadia National Park. Like the park's present-day tourists who rise before dawn to witness the first glint of sunlight striking the North American continent, these Depression-era visitors were also celebrating.<sup>3</sup> Yet theirs was not solely an observance of natural beauty. While many of the participants would comment on the magnificent ocean view spread out beneath them, they gathered primarily to revel in the fine macadam pavement underfoot, and to honor the two men standing before them. When these men, ark superintendent George B. Dorr and the son of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., finally snipped the white silk ribbon to officially open the road up which they all had driven, the crowd cheered enthusiastically as a band stuck up a march. Before they could complete their celebration, however, a storm rained down and forced the ceremony off the mountain top. Climbing back into their automobiles, the celebrants wound their way down what was being touted in local papers as a revolutionary non-skid road, only to reassemble at the Malvern Hotel in nearby Bar Harbor where speeches were followed by a buffet lunch.<sup>4</sup>

This dedication ceremony and the speeches that followed provide valuable information about the relationship between the communities of Mount Desert Island and the motor roads of Acadia National Park.<sup>5</sup> For instance the central role played in the celebration by George B. Dorr and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who being ill at the time was officially represented by his eldest son, suggests that these two men were perceived as primarily responsible for the construction of Acadia's motor roads. This perception is further supported by the speeches given at the Malvern Hotel in which nearly every orator praised both Dorr and Rockefeller. Maine Congressman John E. Nelson, for example, directly thanked Dorr and alluded to Rockefeller, who had donated more land and money to the park for road construction than any

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<sup>3</sup>At 1,530', the summit of Cadillac Mountain is the highest point on the Atlantic coast of both North and South America.

<sup>4</sup>"Old Cadillac Stormy as Road is Dedicated," Bar Harbor (ME) Times, 27 July 1932.

<sup>5</sup>Acadia National Park is located on Mount Desert Island off the coast of Maine. The 35,000-acre park encompasses a large portion of the interior of the island, while several communities lie along its perimeter near the shore. For information on the historical importance of public ceremonies see Susan G. Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in 19th Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

other benefactor. "To those generous men and women who gave these lands, who built these roads," Nelson exclaimed. "To the great heart and the great vision of George B. Dorr, this state and this nation owes a very generous debt of gratitude." While also praising Dorr and Rockefeller, other speakers stressed the widespread community approval for these men's road development projects. "This great road," explained Maine Senator Frederick Hale, "is due to the vision of our people, residents and summer residents, to their generosity in giving the land and to their *unflagging support* of the project."<sup>6</sup>

Along with indicating who those living on Mount Desert Island held responsible for constructing these roads, the dedication ceremony atop Cadillac also suggests how community members thought about the role of such roads within Acadia National Park. Here again the speeches of community leaders prove useful. A number of the speakers at the Malvern discussed both the aesthetic qualities of the park as well as the wonderfully engineered road winding to the summit of its highest mountain. More significantly, many of those talking to the crowd emphasized the complementary character of the relationship between the road and the park's beauty. Cadillac Mountain Road, they said over and over again, would make the park's natural wonders more accessible to the American public. Reiterating what a number of other speakers had already stated, Congressman Nelson told the audience, "we open here today a wonderful highway built by the federal government to make available to all men the matchless beauty of this spot."<sup>7</sup> The road, community leaders argued, would in effect democratize the beauty of Acadia.

Although the dedication celebration atop Cadillac Mountain in 1932 provides valuable information concerning the development of roads in Acadia National Park, reliance on such ceremonies alone can be misleading. Reported in newspapers, recorded for radio, and filmed for the screen, the dedication of Cadillac Mountain Road was a form of public promotion, an example of one community's desire to present a unified portrait to the rest of the nation.<sup>8</sup> It is just such unity that many historians of

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<sup>6</sup>"Old Cadillac Stormy as Road is Dedicated."

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>For information on Mount Desert Island boosters promoting the Cadillac Road dedication to the rest of the nation, see "Many Thousands Will Witness Cadillac Mountain Road Dedication," *Bar Harbor Times*, 20 July 1932. For the event being filmed and recorded see "Old Cadillac Stormy as Road is Dedicated."

Acadia National Park have usually written into their work.<sup>9</sup> Yet the boosterism atop Cadillac is noteworthy not for the social unity it reflects, but rather for the community divisions it attempts to conceal. Other historical evidence, for instance, suggests that not everyone on Mount Desert Island agreed with Dorr and Rockefeller concerning the park's road development. Congressman Nelson's description of "unflagging support" for the Cadillac Mountain Road should be viewed with suspicion.

This debate between community factions, moreover, had a very tangible impact on the development of several park roads. Not only is the relationship between the local communities and the roads of Acadia more complex, but that complexity suggests that the emphasis on Dorr and Rockefeller as solely responsible for these roads is also misplaced. This is not to argue that these two men were ineffectual. On the contrary, the roads of Acadia would have been far different, and most probably far inferior, if these two men had not participated in their construction. But it must be remembered that others were also involved. The complicated history of Acadia's roads, therefore, should not be sought on top of Cadillac Mountain in 1932. Rather one must examine the social contestation surrounding the actual construction of these roads, as well as the effect that this community debate had on their ultimate layout. Only then can one uncover the true cultural legacy of Acadia's motor road system.

The construction of roads in Acadia National Park was an extremely complicated process. The existence of privately owned parcels of land within park boundaries, as well as the need to rely on private as opposed to government funding, hindered the development of motor roads within the park. As land and funding became available, segments of road were constructed and when possible connected to other park or town roads. The entire system, begun in 1921 was not completed until 1958, involved the construction or rehabilitation of more than a dozen separate segments of road. The result, as Rockefeller explained in a letter to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, was "a continuous, unbroken-by-highways, park road circuit to the top of

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<sup>9</sup>For a history of Acadia and its roads which emphasize the community solidarity see Ann Rockefeller Roberts, *Mr. Rockefeller's Roads: The Untold Story of Acadia's Carriage Roads & Their Creator* (Camden, Maine: Down East Books, 1990). For the roles of Dorr and Rockefeller, see Judith S. Goldstein, *Tragedies & Triumphs: The Founding of Acadia National Park* (Somesville, Maine: Port in A Storm Bookstore, 1992).

Cadillac Mountain, down to the sea, for miles along the seacoast and back to Cadillac Mountain.<sup>10</sup>

In order to make the evolution of the principal park motor road, the Park Loop Road, more comprehensible, the construction of the dozen or so segments of this loop have been divided into four chronological stages of development. Each of these stages not only represents a new phase in the construction of the Park Loop Road, but also the entry of a new community faction into the public debate concerning this system as a whole. Only after taking each of these factions into account, can the true cultural legacy of Acadia's motor road system be fully understood.

#### MOUNT DESERT ISLAND'S PRE-PARK ROADS

The Cadillac Mountain Road that was dedicated in 1932 was not the first route to the top of the summit. Long before park officials changed Cadillac's name from Green Mountain, a buckboard road climbed to the summit.<sup>11</sup> Like many of the pre-park roads on the island, the Brewer's buckboard route was used for quite different purposes than its Depression-era successor. This transformation in road use actually began in the 1880s, before the park was even established, when tourists began flocking to enjoy the healthy ocean air of Mount Desert. This shift in the way roads were being used on the island is significant because it also lies at the heart of the community debate that would engulf Mount Desert Island when many years later George Dorr and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. began building motor roads in Acadia National Park.

#### *Indian Footpaths to Settler Roads*

Long before tourists began redefining road use on Mount Desert, Indians moved about the island on a sophisticated network of footpaths. The Wabnaki Indians, who wintered on the mud flats of Otter Cove, relied to a great extent on the ocean and nearby rivers for both their food and their means of transportation. The Wabnaki, however, were hunters as well as fishermen and thus their lifestyle also necessitated land travel. They therefore blazed numerous footpaths from their settlement at Otter Cove, which they called Wauwinet, to various locations on the island.

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<sup>10</sup>Rockefeller to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, 22 August 1939, folder 72, box 122, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>11</sup>Tom St. Germain and Jay Saunders, *Trails of History: Trails of History: The Story of Mount Desert Island's Paths from Norumbega to Acadia* (Bar Harbor, ME: Parkman Publications, 1993), 35-36.



A watering hole frequented by beaver and otters or a prominent vista from which to scout for deer, moose, and bear often determined the direction of these paths as well as their final destinations. As the Wabnaki's summer settlement grew and spread to other areas of Mount Desert, they also blazed trails to these locations in order to foster economic as well as social interaction. In all these instances, geography played a central role in shaping these early footpaths. By sheer physical necessity many of the Indian trails followed the contours of the land. They wound through valleys, cut across clearings, and ran up along river beds. The Wabnaki even established a path to the summit of Cadillac Mountain, which was at times to them a sacred site.<sup>12</sup>

With the arrival of white settlers in 1761, a new cultural force began reshaping these Indian footpaths. Like the Wabnaki with whom they shared the island, early white settlers hunted and fished in order to feed themselves and their families. These colonists also shared the Indian footpaths. Yet these early European arrivals also used the land more intensely than their Indian neighbors. Inspecting the island in 1792 on behalf of a group of potential French emigrants, Bancel de Confoulens wrote, "these inhabitants cultivate enough land to provide themselves with potatoes, corn, barley and vegetables, but they spend most of their time cutting wood." De Confoulens continued, "each family has a small boat from which they catch cod . . . and all have cows and farmyards, poultry of every kind and fine pigs." Thus the earliest white settlers of Mount Desert Island quickly supplemented their hunting and fishing with farming, the raising of domesticated animals, and most importantly with lumbering, all of which resulted in a surplus of goods that were traded on and off the island. "On the day of my arrival there were five ships in Frenchman's Bay," de Confoulens noted, "one of which sailed for London, one for Santo Domingo, and three for Boston, loaded with plank, timber, shooks, bark, and even cordwood."<sup>13</sup> This extraction of natural resources from the island intensified throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the result that by 1870 nearly every square mile of land that

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<sup>12</sup>On Indians on Mount Desert see Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Story of Mount Desert Island* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 3-6. On Indian footpaths on Mount Desert Island see St. Germain and Saunders, 3 & 10. On the geographic contours of Indian footpaths see US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, *The Evolution of Transportation in Western Pennsylvania*, (Denver: National Park Service, 1994).

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in Morison, 29.

could be improved was farmed and pastured, and almost the entire first growth forest had been cut for lumber.<sup>14</sup>

The transportation of these natural resources from farms, lakes, and forests to trade ships waiting on the shore was a central component of the Mount Desert Island economy, and had wide-ranging repercussions for the Indian footpaths crisscrossing the island. The earliest settlers used the Wabnaki footpaths to transport surplus farm produce, domesticated animals, timber, and lake fish from the interior of the island down to the shore, as well as to move supplies back up to their farms and sawmills in the mountains. Through such movement these Indian paths, like others throughout the state of Maine, were widened, sometimes consciously and sometimes not, and often became horse roads.<sup>15</sup> White settlers, for instance, widened the Wabnaki path up Cadillac Mountain in order to allow logging carriages access to nearby timber stands.<sup>16</sup> As trade with the island intensified during the second half of the eighteenth century however, many white settlers on Mount Desert found these Indian trails inadequate and instead cut their own rudimentary roads through the woods. Here again loggers played a central role. Logging companies built their camps as close as possible to timber sources and simply cut woods roads in order to transport felled trees to the shore for shipment. Once loggers had successfully felled an entire stand of trees, they simply found another stand and built another road. Many of the roads on the west side of Mount Desert Island owe their existence to these practices.<sup>17</sup>

While loggers and individual farmers blazed their own crude roads across Mount Desert, island settlers were simultaneously banding together in order to construct public roads to foster trade. As early as 1777, for instance, a number of island residents petitioned local selectmen to lay out a road from Cromwell Cove near present day Bar Harbor to Sand Beach, and from Hulls Cove down through the center of the island to Bass and Southwest Harbors.<sup>18</sup> A similar group of islanders led by Capt. William

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<sup>14</sup>Morison, 32-33.

<sup>15</sup>For Indian footpaths being transformed into horse roads on Mount Desert Island see Germain and Saunders, *Trails of History*, 10. For a similar transformation throughout the State of Maine see Maine Highway Commission, *A History of Maine Roads 1600-1970* (Augusta, ME: State Highway Commission, 1970), 1.

<sup>16</sup>St. Germain and Saunders, 10.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 21-22.

Thompson petitioned the state legislature in 1827 to connect the island by road to the mainland. Toll rates for the bridge, which include set fares for cattle, sheep, pigs, and oxen with carts, suggest the economic impetus behind this road's construction as well.<sup>19</sup> By crossing the Mount Desert Narrows, it followed the natural geography of the land less closely than had earlier Indian footpaths.

Thus before the arrival of tourism on Mount Desert Island road building went hand in hand with economic development. The Wabnaki were the first to blaze overland routes in order to extract natural resources from the interior of the island and transport them to their settlements on the seashore. And although white settlers dramatically altered these early footpaths, often transforming them into the island's first roads, they too used this transportation network to foster the exchange of raw materials. As this trade intensified, so did the residents' desire to improve the road system across island. This belief in the minds of early residents that roads were linked inextricably to the island's economy, however, was to be fundamentally challenged during the second half of the nineteenth century. It was then that tourists, like the first white settlers had before them, began arriving in droves on the shores of Mount Desert Island.

#### *Arrival of the Cottagers*

Although the earliest roads on Mount Desert were used by men like Captain Thompson who needed to transport farm produce, timber, and other commodities across the island, in 1844 an individual bounced along these same crude trading routes who would profoundly transform the way in which they were envisioned and used. In that year artist Thomas Cole, leader of the Hudson River School of landscape painting, arrived on Mount Desert Island. Writing of the buckboard trip he took to his host's home through the gorge between what was then Dry and Newport mountains Cole complained, much like local farmers, of the road's poor quality. "The road was exceedingly bad, stony, and overhung with beech and spruce, and, for miles, without inhabitant." But as Cole continued his journey a radically new perception of the relationship between these early thoroughfares and the scenery

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<sup>18</sup>"History of Island's Early Roads Proves to be Fascinating Study," *Bar Harbor Times*, 14 July 1960.

<sup>19</sup>Harlan D. Unrau, *A Short History of Thompson Island and Historical Assessment of Cultural Resources on Thompson Island, Acadia National Park, Maine* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, Denver Service Center, 1979), 9.

they wound through began to emerge. "The ride afford[ed] fine views of Frenchman's Bay on the left, and the lofty peaks of Mount Desert on the right," he explained, "and came to a romantic place near a mountain gorge."<sup>20</sup> Cole, however, did not only describe these beautiful scenes experienced along the island's roads in his diary, but also painted them, and his scenic landscapes convinced more artists including Frederick Edwin Church to visit the island. It was these artists who in turn promoted the island to the larger public not as an economic entrepot but rather as a tourist destination. Such promotion succeeded, and by 1880 Mount Desert Island was being hailed as one of the most beautiful vacation spots in the country, second only to Newport, Rhode Island.<sup>21</sup> As wealthy vacationers began visiting the island year after year, many decided to built elaborate summer homes, known locally as "cottages," in the former fishing and lumber communities of Bar, Bass, Northeast and Southwest Harbors.

The beauty of Mount Desert Island, however, was only part of the reason for the increase in tourism. Easier access to this once isolated place also played a major role. During the final decades of the nineteenth century the poor condition of Maine's roads was being criticized by a number of tourist organizations. A bicycling guide published in 1891 by the Maine Division of the League of American Wheelmen lamented that "the methods of road repair are faulty, and correct road building has never been regarded as a subject worthy of investigation." The bicyclist, the guide explained, "will find Maine roads made of sand, rocks and clay (that becomes glue when it rains)."<sup>22</sup> During the following twenty years as the number of automobiles throughout the country dramatically increased, the demand for better roads as an encouragement to tourism in Maine intensified. "There is a growing sentiment in many sections of the state," explained the Maine State Highway Commission in 1909, "that the future development of our tourist and summer resort business depends largely upon the development of our system of trunk line highways."<sup>23</sup>

The farmers, fishermen, and loggers living year-round on Mount Desert Island seem to have anticipated these warnings and began developing the island's road system both to accommodate the growing number of tourists and to convince even more of them to

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted in St. Germain and Saunders, 24.

<sup>21</sup>Morison, 44; St. Germain and Saunders, 36; Roberts, 36

<sup>22</sup>Maine Highway Commission, *A History of Maine Roads 1600-1970*, 7.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

visit the island's natural wonders. As early as 1888, for example, locals turned specifically to the construction of roads in an attempt to make Mount Desert Island an autumn as well as summer resort. "A road will be built down the shore of Eagle Lake," reported one local newspaperman, "thence through dense forests, across picturesque streams and brooks, and under overhanging crags and cliffs with mountains looming up on either side." The purpose of such a road, he continued, was to "at once call the attention of the public to it, so that before many months the nucleus of a fall resort will be established."<sup>24</sup> Mount Desert Island's year-round residents, therefore, had slightly shifted their thinking concerning the island's roads. Whereas before Thomas Cole arrived residents had constructed roads to extract natural resources from the interior of the island, with the advent of tourism they began to build roads in order to make the beauty of these resources accessible to tourists. Tourists, in a sense, had merely replaced timber as a way to financial fulfillment. In both instances roads served as the means to achieve these economic ends.

The "cottagers" for whom many of these roads were constructed, however, brought to the island their own preconceived notions concerning these roads and their use. "It is to escape the sights and sounds of the city that intelligent people come in summer to such a place as this rough and beautiful island," wrote summer resident and ex-president of Harvard University Charles W. Eliot in 1904. "The short-season populations," he continued, "do not wish to be reminded in summer of the scenes and noises amid which the greater part of their lives inevitably passes."<sup>25</sup> Yet the scenes and noises most reminiscent of city-life could be found during the first decade of the twentieth century with increasing frequency on the newly constructed roads of Mount Desert Island. Unlike local year-round residents, these vacationers viewed the automobile and the roads upon which they roared as annoying reminders of the modern, urban life they were trying to forget for the summer. Even more important, summer residents saw roads, automobiles and growing numbers of tourists as a direct threat to that which they had sought from Mount Desert in the first place, namely natural beauty. While local year-round residents envisioned roads as economically liberating, summer "cottagers" thought them aesthetically debilitating.

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<sup>24</sup>"A Grand Boheme," *Bar Harbor (ME) Record*, 25 October 1888.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in Judith Goldstein, *Crossing Lines: Histories of Jews and Gentiles in Three Communities* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 181.

*The Mount Desert Island "Car War"*

Although these differing conceptions of the island's roads coexisted peacefully throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, in 1903 they became the focal point of a heated public debate. In that year wealthy summer vacationers were able to convince the Maine State Legislature to give town voters the power to exclude automobiles from Mount Desert Island. When summer residents swung the vote in favor of prohibiting cars from a number of roads near Bar Harbor, and then six years later extended this ban to cover the entire island, year-round residents responded. Led by a handful of local businessmen including hotel owner William Roberts and dentist John T. Hinch, year-round locals publicly condemned the automobile ban on both economic and democratic grounds. In a letter circulated throughout the Bar Harbor community in 1909, for example, Hinch accused "city millionaires" of attempting by "every means in their power to make Bar Harbor a quiet, exclusive resort where their little clique can have full sway and where no state of Maine man is welcome." These cottagers, he continued, were fearful that the automobile would bring a different kind of vacationer who would rejuvenate the island's failing hotel industry. "The business men of Bar Harbor," he concluded, "are beginning to realize that what the millionaires want is unreasonable and unjust."<sup>26</sup> It was just this community divisiveness that George Dorr, who seven years later would take the first step in establishing what is now Acadia National Park, attempted to heal by promoting a compromise whereby cars would be allowed into Bar Harbor, the economic center of the island, while being prohibited from other, more exclusive towns.<sup>27</sup>

Although this "auto war," as it came to be called, represents the emergence of class divisions on Mount Desert Island, it also illustrates most forcefully the diverging conceptions concerning the island's roads on the eve of the establishment of Acadia National Park. Early white settlers on Mount Desert Island developed a vision of roads not completely dissimilar to that of

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<sup>26</sup>"Opponents of Automobile Bill, Circulating Scurrilous Letter Reflecting on Bar Harbor Summer People," *Bangor (ME) Daily Commercial*, 27 January 1909.

<sup>27</sup>Richard Savage, "The Bar Harbor Auto War," *Downeast Magazine*, [need date of article]. Savage is especially useful in exposing the class dimensions of the automobile controversy on Mount Desert Island. See also Patti D'Angelo, "The Arrival of the Automobile," ed., Tammis E. Coffin, *The Rusticator's Journal: A Collection of Articles from the Journal of Friends of Acadia* (Bar Harbor, ME: Friends of Acadia, 1993), 29-31.

the Indians whose paths they used. This vision was rooted in economic opportunity, and although before the middle of the nineteenth century it involved the transportation and exchange of natural resources, after this period it shifted to take advantage of the rise of tourism on the island. Summer vacationers, on the other hand, arrived on Mount Desert with preconceived notions concerning road use. For them, roads and the growing number of automobiles represented both the city they were trying escape as well as a direct threat to the isolated beauty of the island. It was these two competing visions, one of summer residents and the other of year-round locals, that George Dorr tried to mediate in 1909. Although the 1932 ceremony dedicating the Cadillac Mountain Road successfully concealed these divisions behind a cheering crowd, a spirited band, and a number of supportive speeches, they still lurked about as Dorr and Rockefeller's son snipped the ribbon that would officially open the new road.

#### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

The repeal of the automobile ban in 1913 failed to lessen the community tensions that had bubbled to the surface during the preceding decade. If anything, the revocation heightened them. In response a number of wealthy summer residents, including George Dorr and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., took independent action. While these actions were shaped by the social contention of the past, they were also important for the future of Mount Desert Island. In establishing what would become Acadia National Park and by constructing carriage roads within it, both Dorr and Rockefeller laid the foundation of their shared vision concerning the relationship between motor roads and the park. Little did they know, however, that this vision, like the automobile ban of a decade earlier, would also be challenged.

#### *The Carriage Roads of John D. Rockefeller, Jr.*

The repeal of the automobile ban in 1913 alarmed John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Having recently bought a 150-acre estate on Barr Hill above Seal Harbor, he was concerned that the introduction of cars to Mount Desert Island would threaten the tranquillity he had worked so hard to achieve. "One of the things that attracted Mrs. Rockefeller and me most to Mount Desert Island some twenty years ago was that there were no motors on the island," Rockefeller told the editor of the *Bar Harbor Times*. "I greatly deplored the pressures to open the island roads to motors, and was one of those who opposed their admission to the last."<sup>28</sup> In many respects this aversion to the car was

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<sup>28</sup>Undated and untitled article by *Bar Harbor Times* editor Albion Sherman, folder 1079, box 109, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller

indicative of Rockefeller's broader suspicion of modern society. "I believe Mr. Rockefeller had a genuine distaste for the garish advances of civilization," wrote National Park Service Director Horace M. Albright of his personal friend. "So he took every opportunity he felt possible to step in and save his fellow humans from the onslaught of the crippling effects of an industrial society."<sup>29</sup> Rockefeller himself admitted as much, stating that he "would like to see Mount Desert Island invaded as little by modern standards of life as possible."<sup>30</sup> It is in direct response to this "invasion" that Rockefeller began building carriage roads.

In many ways Rockefeller's childhood prepared him well for his carriage road projects on Mount Desert Island. As a young boy he had helped his father develop the carriage road system at the family's summer estates, first at Forest Hill just outside Cleveland and then in Pocantico Hills when the Rockefellers moved to New York City. It was during these years that Rockefeller learned the finer points of laying out a road and refined his own landscape philosophy. At Pocantico Hills, for instance, his roads tended to follow the contours of the land whenever possible and sought out views which provided a sequence of experiences that reflected what Rockefeller felt were the best features of the land. Many of the carriage roads he built on Mount Desert Island were of similar design.<sup>31</sup>

When the family moved to New York City in 1875, frequent rides in Central Park also began to affect Rockefeller's thoughts concerning carriage roads, yet here the influence was social rather than technical. When the Rockefellers arrived in New York, Central Park was nearly completed. Its construction had begun after wealthy carriage owners, fearing that the expansion of the city northward would deprive them of rustic sites for leisurely carriage drives, successfully lobbied the state legislature for a new park in the center of Manhattan. Even the final layout of the park appears to have been designed primarily with elite carriage owners in mind. In order to ensure uninterrupted carriage riding, park designers Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted banned omnibuses, hacks, and street

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Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>29</sup>Horace M. Albright, Diaries. Personal collection of Marion Schenk, Studio City, California, quoted in Roberts, 6.

<sup>30</sup>Rockefeller to Charles K. Savage, 17 May 1955. folder 1078, box 109, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>31</sup>For Rockefeller's experience in road design at Forest Hill and Pocantico Hills, see Roberts, 11 & 293.



railways from park drives and restricted city traffic, most of it commercial, to sunken roads cutting across the park. Drivers who could not afford their own horse and carriage, therefore, were separated from the park, seeing only high stone walls as they passed through it.<sup>32</sup>

#### *George Dorr's Park*

In many ways Rockefeller's early experiences involving carriage roads echoed that of Dorr and the creation of Acadia National Park. Like Rockefeller, Dorr and the men who gathered together at Northeast Harbor in 1901 to discuss the preservation of land on Mount Desert were reacting to the rise of tourism and the threat it posed to the island's isolated beauty. "Place after place where I was in the habit of walking or picnicking has been converted to private uses," wrote Charles Eliot in his letter of invitation for this meeting.<sup>33</sup> Also like Rockefeller, these men were wealthy summer residents most of whom resided permanently in Boston, Philadelphia, or New York City. In many ways, then, men like banker John Stewart Kennedy, railway executive George W. Vanderbilt, and merchant William J. Schieffelin, who at this meeting formed the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations, were of the same set which had supported the car ban of 1909 and who had sufficient financial resources to take carriage drives in Central Park with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Yet whereas Rockefeller built carriage roads to keep the automobile at bay, these men bought up land on Mount Desert Island in order to check its development for tourism.

The Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservation was incorporated in 1903 and immediately began acquiring land for protection. Although the first two parcels were located near Seal Harbor, in time a number of tracts were bought and donated throughout the eastern half of Mount Desert Island. Dorr, for instance, who would spend much of his family fortune securing land for the park, purchased and then donated the ravine between Picket Mountain (now Huguenot Head) and Newport (since 1908, Champlain) Mountain, and helped buy the top of Cadillac Mountain (with funds provided by John S. Kennedy) from the Brewers. More purchases and donations by various parties followed until by 1913

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<sup>32</sup>For analysis of the elite nature of Central Park and its carriage drives see Clay McShane, *Down the Asphalt Path: The Automobile and the American City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 33; and Elizabeth Blackmar and Roy Rozenzweig, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (New York: H. Holt and Co., 1994).

<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Goldstein, *Tragedies & Triumphs*, 10.

the Trustees had preserved approximately 5,000 acres of land on Mount Desert Island.

Feeling economically threatened by this transfer of land from the private into the public domain, that same year the island's failing timber industry attempted to have the Trustees' tax-free status revoked.<sup>34</sup> In response, Dorr convinced the Trustees to protect their reservations for all time by offering them to the Department of the Interior, and on 3 July 1916 the Sieur de Monts National Monument was dedicated. When the monument was reauthorized as Lafayette National Park three years later, it became the first national park east of the Mississippi and the only park in the country created solely from donations of private land. Initially called Lafayette in honor of the island's colonial heritage, it was renamed Acadia in 1929. As one of his early official jobs as the monument's first superintendent, Dorr reported that 101,255 tourists and 15,361 automobiles visited the park by October of 1916.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Rockefeller's Motor Roads in Dorr's Park*

Although Rockefeller had donated \$17,500 to the Trustees in their effort to have their lands designated a national monument, he had openly expressed reservations about such a move. "Do you not feel," he wrote to Reservation founder Charles Eliot in 1915, "that the establishment of this monument will bring an undesirable class of tourists to Bar Harbor in their automobiles who, if automobiles are admitted to the south side of the Island, will be a real nuisance to the residents there?"<sup>36</sup> The majority of residents on the south side of the island lived in the exclusive summer communities of Seal and Northwest Harbors. For Rockefeller, then, the monument had the potential of exacerbating the threat posed by his old nemesis—the automobile. And his fears quickly proved correct. Ever since he had begun constructing carriage roads around his Seal Harbor estate, motorists had attempted and often succeeded in driving on them. With the creation of the national monument and the donation by Rockefeller

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<sup>34</sup>Lenard E. Brown, *Acadia National Park, Maine: History Basic Data* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, Office of History and Historic Architecture, Eastern Service Center, February 1971), 68-72.

<sup>35</sup>Richard Warden Hale, *The Story of Bar Harbor: An Informal History Recording One Hundred and Fifty Years in the Life of a Community* (New York: Ives Washburn, Inc., 1949), 200.

<sup>36</sup>Rockefeller to Charles Eliot, 26 February 1915, folder 1047, box 105, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

of many of these carriage roads to it, this illegal practice continued with increased frequency.<sup>37</sup> Even more alarming to Rockefeller was the rising pressure motorists were placing on park officials to officially open up the carriage roads to cars as well.

Rockefeller's response to this intensified invasion of what he called "modern life" was surprisingly similar to his reaction a decade earlier when cars alone threatened his island solitude. Whereas then he had constructed carriage roads in order to keep the automobile at bay, after the creation of the Sieur de Monts National Monument he decided to build scenic motor roads in order to appease automobilists and thus keep them from rumbling down his prized carriage roads. "The preservation of the horse roads from intrusion of motors," Rockefeller explained, "has for all time been doubly assured in that the motor road affords as fine, as varied, as extensive, and as intimate views of the beauties of the Park as do any of the horse roads."<sup>38</sup> Although he envisioned his motor roads to be as scenic as his carriage roads, Rockefeller also demanded that they remain independent. To accomplish this he decided to use bridges, grade separations, and gate houses to maintain the distinctiveness of both systems. Like in Central Park, then, Rockefeller's motor roads in Acadia would be physically separated from the carriage road system.

Although the ceremony atop Cadillac Mountain in 1932 would have us think otherwise, the decision to build motor roads in Acadia National Park, like the decision to establish the park itself, was not indicative of a conscious desire on the part of Rockefeller and Dorr to open up the island's natural beauty to visitors of all backgrounds. This had already begun independently of these two men. Rather, both the establishment of the park and the decision to construct its motor roads were for the most part defensive reactions intended to control this democratization process. Although many on Mount Desert Island at first applauded both men's attempt to channel the growth of tourism, it was not supported by all. The timber interests who in 1913 had attempted to revoke the Trustee's tax-free status, for example, were only one of many community factions who disagreed with both Dorr and Rockefeller's vision concerning the motor roads both men began building in 1927.

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<sup>37</sup>Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. to Rockefeller, 11 July 1930. Folder 127, Box 125, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>38</sup>Undated and untitled article by Bar Harbor Times editor Albion Sherman, *op cit*.

#### THE JORDAN POND-EAGLE LAKE MOTOR ROAD SEGMENT

The Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake segment of the Park Loop was the first motor road constructed in the national monument and therefore represents the first stage in the development of the park's motor road system. Commonly known as the "Mountain Road", it was also the first time that George Dorr and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. collaborated to implement their shared vision concerning the relationship between the park and its motor roads. However, immediately before the first section of this road was complete, community opposition stalled the project. Although this opposition ultimately failed in halting for good the construction of the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake segment, the community debate it aroused succeeded in altering not only this road but the future of the park's motor road system in ways unanticipated by both Rockefeller and Dorr.

#### *The First Collaboration*

The Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake Road comprises the western portion of the Park Loop motor road. It begins at the Eagle Lake Road (Maine Route 233) near the northern edge of Eagle Lake and runs south to the Jordan Pond Tea House, a popular island eatery since 1896. Along its approximately five-mile route motorists are provided with views of Sargent Mountain, the Bubbles, Eagle Lake and Jordan Pond. The original layout swung sharply along the northern shore of Bubble Pond. Considered hazardous, this turn was straightened by the Bureau of Public Roads in 1964. Large, irregularly shaped border stones were placed at 3'-4' foot intervals as guardrails along much of the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake segment, a practice, copied from the Rockefeller carriage roads, that subsequently became standard for most of Acadia's motor roads. When the road opened in 1925 it had been surfaced with native pink granite from a quarry near Bubble Pond in order to blend in with the surrounding landscape, had an 18 mph speed limit, and was closed to automobiles from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.<sup>39</sup>

Dorr drew up the original plans for the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road in 1922 in response to instructions from National Park Service Director Stephen Mather asking all park superintendents to submit estimates for road projects in their respective parks.

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<sup>39</sup>"Road Through to Jordan Pond," *Bar Harbor Times*, 30 September 1925; "On Bubble Pond Road Which Opened Monday," *Bar Harbor Times*, 16 July 1964. For more on this and other segments of Acadia's motor road system see Eliot Foulds, "Compliance Documentation for the Historic Motor Roads: Acadia National Park, Federal Highways Project #PRA-ACAD-4A10" (North Atlantic Region: National Park Service, Cultural Landscape Program, Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation).

According to Dorr the road was necessary "to enable our rangers to pass readily between the northern and southern sides of our mountain range, for wildlife and woods protection."<sup>40</sup> After traveling to Acadia in June that same year and inspecting the proposed route, Mather and Assistant Director Arno B. Cammerer wholeheartedly approved Dorr's road plan.

As soon as Rockefeller received copies of these plans he wrote Dorr stating his desire to become involved in the project. The road, he felt, would allow motorists access to the interior of the park and thereby help to keep them off his carriage roads. The Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road "would make available for motorists as fine scenery as any in the Park," Rockefeller wrote Dorr in September 1922, and its "construction would still further justify the Government's policy of developing the balance of the park for use by pedestrians and horse-drawn vehicles."<sup>41</sup> Rockefeller pledged \$150,000 to the project in order to compensate for insufficient appropriations from the federal government. Construction of the road began that year ostensibly under government auspices, but along with providing the funding Rockefeller also chose the engineer and the contractor for the job.

#### *Summer Resident Opposition*

Even before the first section of the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road could be completed, summer residents on Mount Desert Island began publicly opposing the Dorr and Rockefeller plan. Led by Northeast Harbor summer resident and U.S. Senator George Wharton Pepper, who in 1920 had also opposed Rockefeller's proposal to build a carriage road through the Amphitheatre area of the park, a faction of summer residents began a letter-writing campaign to Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work urging the abandonment of the project.<sup>42</sup> In January 1924, Senator Pepper, along with Harold Peabody and Mrs. Eliot Wadsworth, were also able to obtain an interview with Work in which they expressed similar concerns. The three summer residents asked the Secretary to halt construction at least until a public hearing on the road could be convened. Work agreed, scheduled the hearing for 26 March and issued a temporary injunction against the road project.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Russ and Pam Butcher, "Carriage Roads and Bridges of Acadia National Park," *Downeast Magazine*, August 1972, 54.

<sup>41</sup>Rockefeller to George Dorr, quoted in Foulds, 9.

<sup>42</sup>Foulds, 10.

<sup>43</sup>Arno B. Cammerer, Assistant Director, National Park Service, to Dorr, 5 January 1924, in "Papers Relating to Road Hearing Before Secretary Work, March 26, 1924," Acadia National

During the period leading up to the hearing in Washington summer residents continued to express a variety of concerns regarding the construction of the Eagle Lake-Jordan Pond motor road. Like Rockefeller and the city men who had established the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations, many opponents were suspicious of both the automobile and the modern society it represented. Summer resident Barrington Moore, for example, opposed the road because he felt "there would be a constant rumble and roar of the automobile, disturbing to the ear."<sup>44</sup> Fellow cottager Joseph Allen noted similar concerns. "Is it not true that the tendency of modern life has been to increase tremendously the speed of living," he asked Rockefeller. "A place of freedom from this pressure and second-rateness is of inestimable value to the community."<sup>45</sup> Such a place, Allen argued, was threatened by the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road.

Along with this suspicion of modern life, opposition to the motor road was based on class fears as well. Many opponents, for instance, were worried that the proposed motor road would result in an unwanted influx of working-class tourists. Writing in the *Boston Evening Transcript* in August 1924, travel writer Herbert Gleason noted that summer residents "frankly stated their fear that the proposed development would bring in a 'peanut crowd' of the Coney Island type, and that the park would speedily be littered with egg shells, banana peels, [and] old tin cans."<sup>46</sup> Fear of the wrong type of tourist, then, was another reason summer residents opposed the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road. Although cottagers feared the road would introduce both the modern automobile as well as working-class tourists to the island, by far their most common complaint concerning the project centered around the potential threat to the isolated regions through which the proposed motor road would run. In newspaper editorials, petitions to congressmen, and even personal notes to Rockefeller himself, summer residents argued the road would

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Park (hereafter ACAD) Library. See also "Would Stop Road Work in Lafayette National Park," *Bar Harbor Times*, 5 March, 1924.

<sup>44</sup>Cammerer to Stephen Mather, Director, National Park Service, 2 July 1924, National Park Service, in "Papers Relating to Road Hearing Before Secretary Work, March 26, 1924," ACAD Library.

<sup>45</sup>Joseph Allen to Rockefeller, 27 December 1923, folder 1134, box 113, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>46</sup>Herbert Gleason, "Distinguished Specialists Overcome Obstacles in Park Road Case," *Boston Evening Transcript*, 9 August 1924.

destroy the wilderness quality of the area between Jordan Pond and Eagle Lake. In a 1925 editorial to *The New York Herald Tribune*, for instance, Joseph Allen noted that the proposed Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road "destroys in large part and permanently the wild beauty and secluded spirit of the Jordan Valley."<sup>47</sup> Echoing this sentiment, William Turner wrote Rockefeller in April 1924, arguing that the motor and carriage roads planned for the Jordan Valley would "mar and largely destroy the Bubble Pond wilderness, which in the opinion of most over of the Island should be preserved intact."<sup>48</sup> Even the most outspoken opponent of the road, Senator Pepper, objected on similar grounds. Calling the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake segment "a rich man's folly," Pepper claimed that the road "destroys the wilderness for pedestrians and campers without benefitting the mass of people in autos."<sup>49</sup>

The concern for wilderness expressed by summer residents on Mount Desert Island was not an isolated incident. On the contrary, it was during this period that the majority of Americans were for the first time introduced to wilderness philosophy. Such concerns were first expressed in 1908, when in the aftermath of its most devastating earthquake the city of San Francisco petitioned the federal government to create a reservoir in Yosemite National Park's Hetch Hetchy Valley. The highly public debate over this dam centered around the region's wild character, and in the end destroyed much of the cohesiveness of America's early conservation movement by polarizing it into two competing camps. Proponents of the dam, led by federal Chief Forester and "wise use" advocate Gifford Pinchot, believed natural resources such as Hetch Hetchy should be developed and managed to benefit the public. Opponents of the dam rejected such utilitarianism and instead publicly supported the preservation of region's wild state. Chief spokesman for this faction was John Muir, who a decade earlier had been responsible for the establishment of Yosemite National Park. While many summer residents tended to

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<sup>47</sup>Joseph Allen, "Scarring Mount Desert," *New York Herald Tribune*, editorial dated 10 January 1925, folder 1133, box 113, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>48</sup>William Jay Turner to Rockefeller, 11 April 1924, folder 1085, box 109, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>49</sup>Senator George Pepper to L. E. Kimball, 3 March 1924, in "Papers Relating to the Road Hearing Before Secretary Work, March 26, 1924," ACAD Library.

share Muir's philosophy, Rockefeller and Dorr's road work reflected the wise-use ideology promoted by Pinchot.<sup>50</sup>

*Wilderness Philosophy and its Impact on Acadia's Roads*

At the March 26th hearing in Washington, Rockefeller and Dorr were able to rally enough support to overwhelm their opponents, who like Pepper, believed that the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road was a threat to the wilderness quality of the Bubble Pond area. They accomplished this partly by creating a "Washington hearing fund" amounting to several thousand dollars with which they transported road proponents to Washington to testify.<sup>51</sup> Both men were also able to convince their influential friends who were unable or unwilling to attend the hearing to write letters of support for the project. Governor of Maine Percival Baxter, Maine Central Railroad president Morris McDonald, and well-known landscape gardener Beatrix Farrand each wrote letters to Secretary of the Interior Work praising the proposed road.<sup>52</sup> Because of such support, Work ruled that the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road was not a threat to the wild quality of the region and repealed the injunction that had halted its construction.

Although Senator Pepper and his fellow summer residents suffered defeat during the 1924 hearing, the influence of their wilderness philosophy had repercussions for the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road. After the hearing, for instance, the correspondences between Secretary Work and Superintendent Dorr suggest a heightened concern for the road's impact on the wilderness quality of the region. When on 25 July Work officially authorized the next section of the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road, he specifically instructed Dorr to "exercise the greatest care in hiding scars of construction."<sup>53</sup> Another example of this increased awareness is

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<sup>50</sup>Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 129, 138, 161.

<sup>51</sup>Rockefeller, to Arthur Allen, 31 March 1924, folder 1085, box 109, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC; Rockefeller to A. H. Lyman, 9 May 1924, folder 1085, box 109, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>52</sup>Maine Governor Percival Baxter to Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work, 17 March 1924; Maine Central Railroad president Morris McDonald to Work, 29 February 1924; Farrand to Director, National Park Service, 10 March 1924, in "Papers Relating to the Road Hearing Before Secretary Work, March 26, 1924," ACAD Library.



illustrated in the decision to surface the road with native granite asphalt in order to make it blend into the surrounding landscape.<sup>54</sup>

The wilderness philosophy of these summer residents, did not only affect the construction of the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road, but also had far-reaching repercussions for the future of the entire motor road system of Acadia National Park. After they were defeated at the hearing in 1924, yet before the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road was even completed, summer residents who feared the expansion of Dorr and Rockefeller's road program formed a committee to address the issue. Organized in 1926 by Gist Blair of the Bar Harbor Village Improvement Association, a non-official community group dominated by summer residents, this committee hired landscape architect Charles Eliot 2nd to make their own development study of the island. Eliot, who was the nephew of the founder of the Hancock County Trustees for Public Reservations, published his *The Future of Mount Desert Island* in 1928. In it he called for doubling the park's 1927 boundaries and for establishing ten "wilderness zones." "The introduction of large-scale man-made objects such as buildings, roads, etc., should be avoided as far as possible," Eliot wrote. "There can be no doubt but that walking is the best way to see and appreciate this kind of area and, therefore, footpaths and trails are the most suitable means of access."<sup>55</sup>

Rockefeller understood the underlying implications of this report. Writing to Cammerer in 1926 he noted, "this committee was organized for the sole purpose of preventing or at least delaying as long as possible the further construction of any roads."<sup>56</sup> Partially in order to neutralize this committee, which had its roots in the wilderness ideology of Senator Pepper and opposition to the construction of the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road, Rockefeller hired his own landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., to undertake another development study of the park. Like Rockefeller, Charles Eliot 2nd understood the importance of having the nation's most well

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<sup>53</sup>Work to Dorr, 25 July 1924, in "Papers Relating to the Road Hearing Before Secretary Work, March 26, 1924," ACAD Library.

<sup>54</sup>Foulds, 15.

<sup>55</sup>Charles W. Eliot 2nd, "The Future of Mount Desert Island: A Report to the Planning Committee, Bar Harbor Village Improvement Association" (Bar Harbor, ME: Bar Harbor Village Improvement Association, 1928), 25-26.

<sup>56</sup>Rockefeller to Cammerer, 7 September 1926, quoted in Roberts, 98.

respected landscape architect involved in this debate over wilderness, and attempted to persuade Olmsted of his own point of view. "I feel very strongly that the trouble at Mt. Desert is the preservation of wilderness areas," Eliot wrote Olmsted in 1929. "I am delighted that you have been called in on this problem, and am hopeful that you can divert Mr. Rockefeller's activities into useful lines."<sup>57</sup>

Although Olmsted never became a true advocate of Eliot's wilderness ideas, his employment by Rockefeller would have an enormous impact on the motor road system of Acadia National Park. Not only did Olmsted design some of Acadia's motor roads, but his early involvement set an incredibly high aesthetic standard for subsequent projects carried out by the Bureau of Public Roads. The wilderness philosophy of summer residents, then, one begun by Senator Pepper in 1924 and elaborated upon two years later by Charles Eliot 2nd of the Bar Harbor Village Improvement Association, indirectly shaped both the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road and the entire motor road system of Acadia. This wilderness philosophy, moreover, was not a new idea. Rather it echoed that promoted by summer residents who came to the island with their own vision of road use, and who in 1909 succeeded in banning automobiles from Mount Desert. They too saw a threat in the automobile and the roads over which they rumbled. By joining into a public debate concerning the road being constructed from Eagle Lake to Jordan Pond, summer residents during the late 1920s were continuing the debate of 1909. In the process they were also challenging the assumptions of Dorr and Rockefeller concerning road construction. While at this moment these summer residents were the most vocal group, as more road segments were proposed by Dorr, Rockefeller and Olmsted, other factions would join this community debate to even further shape the park's roads in ways totally unanticipated by these three men.

#### THE SIEUR DE MONT'S SPRING MOTOR ROAD SEGMENT

The Sieur de Mont's Spring motor road was the second segment of the Park Loop to be planned. By far the most controversial road built in Acadia, the dispute surrounding its construction first involved only Dorr, Rockefeller, and Olmsted. Soon, however, summer residents again became involved, objecting to the route for reasons similar to those expressed during the 1924 hearings over the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road. More importantly, it was also during this second stage in the development of Acadia's motor road system that another community faction decided to join the public debate over road use in the park. Angered by the

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<sup>57</sup>Charles Eliot 2nd to Olmsted, 26 November 1929, RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

repeated protests of summer residents and smarting under the economic hardships of the Great Depression, year-round residents of Mount Desert Island took action of their own to encourage this road project. In the process, both these working-class islanders as well as their wealthier summer neighbors altered the route through the Sieur de Monts Spring area in ways completely unanticipated by Dorr, Rockefeller, and Olmsted.

#### *Visions of a Park Loop*

The Sieur de Monts segment composes the northern portion of the Park Loop Road, connecting the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road running through the center of the park, with Ocean Drive on Mount Desert Island's eastern shore. Coming down off the eastern side of Kebo Mountain, the road keeps to the north of Great Meadow, offering motorists southerly views across the meadow and down the Tarn Valley between Champlain and Dorr mountains. After intersecting near downtown Bar Harbor with Ledgelawn Avenue, which during the planning process of this road segment was still the original park entrance, the Sieur de Monts segment veers south and runs to the east of the Wild Gardens of Acadia, the Sieur de Monts Spring, and the Abbe Museum, providing automobile access to all three sites. The road then swings east just before Beaver Dam Pond, after which it joins with Ocean Drive. Because this route was embroiled in controversy, the more than two mile road was not completed until 1940 by the Bureau of Public Roads. As with the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake road, large border stones act as guardrails along the Sieur de Monts Spring segment. All curves on the road were designed with spiral transitions, widened and superelevated for a fifty mph speed limit.

Although this route through the Sieur de Monts Spring area is today set solidly in stone and asphalt, this was far from the case in 1929, when Dorr and Rockefeller began discussing the construction of a motor road that would connect their recently completed road near Eagle Lake with the ocean views along the eastern shoreline of Mount Desert Island. For scenic reasons Rockefeller wanted the road to come down off Kebo Mountain and hug the eastern base of what is presently called Dorr Mountain. From there he proposed that the road continue behind and west of the Sieur de Monts Spring and the Abbe Museum, and then follow southward along the western shore of the Tarn. Dorr, on the other hand, who had worked hard to create the original national monument from the area surrounding the spring, insisted that the motor road come down through the Great Meadow and pass to the east, or in front of, the spring and the museum. He then wanted it to run along the eastern side of the Tarn. The main point of contention, then, was whether the road should run to the east or west of both the spring and the Tarn. Furthermore, because Dorr and Rockefeller each owned parcels of land through which either

of these proposals must pass, either man could in a sense block the others' route. As Rockefeller wrote in 1929, "neither of us can develop our ideas most fully or most satisfactorily without the complete cooperation of the other."<sup>58</sup>

In order to settle this dispute, Rockefeller asked Olmsted to study both routes and decide which was better from a scenic point of view. After analyzing each proposal Olmsted, came out in favor of Dorr's route, agreeing that "it is better to have both the park road and the public road on the east side of the Tarn," and thus in front of the Sieur de Monts Spring and the Abbe Museum.<sup>59</sup> Olmsted also supported Dorr's and Rockefeller's agreed upon desire to run the road southward of the Tarn down the valley until turning sharply east near the Beehive to connect with the old Ocean Drive, which at this time was controlled by the town of Bar Harbor.<sup>60</sup>

Settling this dispute between Dorr and Rockefeller, however, was only one component of the comprehensive park development plan which Olmsted had been compiling for Rockefeller partly in order to counter Charles Eliot's wilderness report of 1928.<sup>61</sup> Besides deciding on the Sieur de Monts segment, Olmsted's plan also recommended a number of other road projects that would ultimately result in one grand motor road encircling the eastern half of Acadia National Park. When in September 1930 Rockefeller announced his desire to donate \$4 million towards the realization of the Park Loop Road, the Sieur de Monts section was singled out as the project's most significant section.

Partly due to the Great Depression, Rockefeller's announcement immediately became front page news on both Mount Desert Island and throughout the rest of the country. The Washington Post, for instance, ran the headline "Rockefeller Plans \$4,000,000 Highway, 500 Men Will Work Three Years on Mount Desert Island Road."

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<sup>58</sup>Rockefeller to Hubbard, Olmsted Brothers, 18 September 1929, RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress. For a good description of these two routes, also see Foulds, 20.

<sup>59</sup>"Report by Olmsted Brothers, Landscape Architects, to Accompany Plans Showing Recommendations and Suggestions for Road Locations and Other Improvements in the Region Between Red Rock Spring and the South End of the Tarn," 14 November 1929. RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>For instance, when Rockefeller announced his comprehensive plan for the park, the Sieur de Monts road was its primary feature.

Closer to home *The Bar Harbor Times* was a bit more cautious, explaining in its page-one story that "for a short distance the [proposed] road follows the route of the Ocean Drive and the final decision to build the highway is contingent upon action to be taken by the Town of Bar Harbor in turning over to the park certain sections of this drive fronting upon the ocean."<sup>62</sup> Bar Harbor, then, could make or break Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted's Park Loop plan.

#### *Wilderness Redux*

As they had during the construction of the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road, Mount Desert Island's summer residents publicly objected to the route proposed by Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted through the Sieur de Monts Spring area of the park. And although they again objected on wilderness grounds, these cottagers seem to have learned from their defeat in 1924 and to have undertaken a more coordinated approach to their opposition. Some like Mrs. Henry Parkman wrote letters of opposition to *The Bar Harbor Times*, stating that the Sieur de Monts road threatened "the last wild area left on that side of the island."<sup>63</sup> Other summer residents wrote directly to Rockefeller himself, stating their belief that the proposed road would threaten the wilderness condition of the area just south of the Tarn and around the Gorham Mountain-Beehive Saddle. Richard Hale, for instance, wrote of his concern for the region near the base of Picket Mountain, while Lincoln Cromwell expressed his worry over "the part between the mountain road and the Beehive."<sup>64</sup> Summer residents also organized a letter-writing campaign to the federal government. Virginia McFadden circulated a pre-typed, ready-to-sign letter of protest addressed to the Secretary of the Interior which specifically endorsed Eliot's wilderness report and called

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<sup>62</sup>"Rockefeller Offers to Build a \$4,000,000 Motor Road for Park," *Bar Harbor Times*, 10 September 1930; "Rockefeller Plans \$4,000,000 Highway: 500 Men Will Work Three Years on Mount Desert Island Road," *The Washington Post*, 11 September 1930.

<sup>63</sup>"More Summer Residents Oppose Proposed Park Motor Roads," editorial letter by Mrs. Henry Parkman, *Bar Harbor Times*, 3 December 1930.

<sup>64</sup>Hale to Rockefeller 19 September 1930, RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress; Lincoln Cromwell to Rockefeller 28 February 1931, folder 1142, box 114, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

for the abandonment of the Sieur de Monts motor road.<sup>65</sup> Finally, some summer residents went beyond mere letter writing. Mr. Potter Palmer, who owned land along the proposed route, simply refused to sell it to the park.<sup>66</sup>

Along with opposing on wilderness grounds the construction of a motor road through the Sieur de Monts section, summer residents also attacked the plan as undemocratic. In a scathing letter to the Secretary of the Interior, Richard Hale complained that summer residents were living "under a benevolent despotism . . . of one or two-man rule."<sup>67</sup> In a similar letter to his friend Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Hale also criticized Rockefeller for failing to inform the public of his road plans. Referring to a presentation Rockefeller made at an exclusive social club in Northeast Harbor he wrote, "going to the Pot and Kettle Club and telling that gang with a map what you are going to do is not taking the public into your confidence." Hale concluded that the summer residents of Mount Desert Island "smart under the domination of benefactors of great wealth who, like an Oriental Caliph, give us something delightful and ram it down our throats."<sup>68</sup>

In response to such criticism, it is not surprising that on 19 January 1931, Rockefeller rescinded his \$4 million offer to build a park loop motor road. In his letter to the National Park Service asking to be released from this obligation, Rockefeller made it clear that it was the objection of summer residents, the majority of which protested the road on wilderness grounds, that was responsible for this decision. "Within the last three months," Rockefeller wrote, "quite a few summer residents of Mount Desert Island, all of them my friends, have in one way or another voiced their opposition—in some instances quite bitterly—to further road construction in Acadia National Park."<sup>69</sup> In a similar letter to *The Bar Harbor Times*, Rockefeller explained his decision to the communities of Mount Desert Island.

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<sup>65</sup>Virginia H. McFadden, 16 September 1930, box 204, Central Classified Files, RG 79, National Park Service, NARA.

<sup>66</sup>Rockefeller to Cammerer, 7 September 1933, Folder 1195, Box 118, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>67</sup>Hale to Work, 10 November 1930, Central Classified Files, RG 79, National Park Service, NARA.

<sup>68</sup>Hale to Olmsted, 9 October 1930, folder 7, RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>69</sup>Rockefeller to Director, National Park Service, 19 January 1931, folder 953, box 96, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

"I have no desire," he wrote, "to be put in the position of forcing upon even a small minority of the people who frequent Mound Desert Island something they do not want."<sup>70</sup>

#### *Year-Round Residents Join the Motor Road Debate*

It was in response to the withdrawal of Rockefeller's \$4 million offer that year-round residents on Mount Desert Island took action. Like their wealthy summer neighbors, year-round locals also participated in a highly organized campaign. While the summer cottagers had opposed Rockefeller's road plan, year-round residents wholeheartedly supported it and wrote letters, formed committees, and took municipal action to try to convince Rockefeller to resubmit his offer to build the Park Loop Road.

At the forefront of this campaign was the Bar Harbor Board of Trade. Understanding that the proposed road would link the business district of Bar Harbor with the rest of the Park Loop Road, thus bringing even more tourist dollars into town, the board immediately organized a "Citizens Committee" to look into the issue. The committee determined that the majority of year-round residents supported the road project, and began a letter-writing campaign in January 1931 aimed at convincing Rockefeller to reconsider his withdrawal.<sup>71</sup> Letters were mailed to both senators from Maine, to the new Director of the National Parks Service, Horace Albright, and to Rockefeller himself. A. L. Getchell, President of the Bar Harbor Board of Trade, even wrote to Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur, explaining that "it would seem most regrettable that [Rockefeller] should be influenced, by what seems to me to be such an inferior minority among our summer visitors."<sup>72</sup> Letters were also addressed to *The Bar Harbor Times* in support of Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted's proposed Park Loop Road, including the Sieur de Monts segment. "Mr. Rockefeller's proposed road would have meant so much to all of those who do not have an opportunity to 'get rich quick' during the short summer season," wrote one concerned year-round resident.<sup>73</sup> Economic concerns, therefore, not the preservation

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<sup>70</sup>"Rockefeller Moves to Withdraw Offer to Build Park Motor Road," *Bar Harbor Times*, 28 January 1931.

<sup>71</sup>"Rockefeller Urged to Reconsider the Withdrawal of His Offer," *Bar Harbor Times*, 4 February 1931.

<sup>72</sup>A. L. Getchell to Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur, 16 February 1931, folder 1138, box 113, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>73</sup>"Bar Harbor Men Favor Building Park Motor Road," editorial by Mr. A. L. Higgins, *Bar Harbor Times*, 17 December 1930.

of wilderness, were of primary importance for year round residents.

The Board of Trade's "Citizens Committee" and other year-round residents of Mount Desert Island, however, did not rely solely on letters to express their support for the proposed motor plan. They also took unified community action in order to persuade Rockefeller to reconsider his withdrawal. At the weekly Board of Trade luncheon, for instance, fifty prominent business men from Bar Harbor unanimously passed a resolution endorsing the loop road project. Similar group resolutions followed. Both the Mountain View and Bay View granges located in Bar Harbor adopted resolutions which "heartily endorse[d] the recent generous offer of Mr. Rockefeller to construct another automobile road through other parts of Acadia National Park." The Sieur de Monts Spring road, both granges argued, "will not in any way seriously mar the scenic beauties of those sections."<sup>74</sup> Thus along with arguing that the Rockefeller-Dorr-Olmsted plan was necessary to help local workers get through the Depression, year-round residents also supported the proposal by refuting the summer residents' wilderness platform.

More important than the letters to congressmen and the public resolutions of support for the comprehensive road plan, however, was the immediate political action year-round residents took in their town meetings after Rockefeller rescinded his offer. Not only did town after town on Mount Desert Island adopt resolutions publicly endorsing the plan, but on 3 March the Town of Bar Harbor also voted to relinquish municipal control of the key portion of the old Ocean Drive and give it to the park, effectively clearing the way for the implementation of the comprehensive motor road plan.<sup>75</sup>

#### *Community Debate Changes the Park Loop Road*

Because of this public support on the part of year-round residents for both the proposed motor road through the Sieur de Monts area of the park as well as for the comprehensive Park Loop Road plan in general, Rockefeller decided in 1933 to rescind the withdrawal of his \$4 million offer. Although Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted were now able to move ahead with their plan, the

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<sup>74</sup>"Resolution Adopted by Mountain View Grange, No. 484 at its Regular Meeting, February 6, 1931," and "Resolution Adopted by Bay View Grange, No. 267, at its Regular Meeting, February 4, 1931," folder 1138, box 113, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>75</sup>Serenus Rodick to Charles Heydt, 3 March 1931, folder 1202, box 119, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.



community debate that had raged on Mount Desert Island during the last three years between summer and year-round residents had dramatically altered the plan itself.

Just as the wilderness philosophy of summer residents had affected the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road, so too did it alter the motor road that Rockefeller, Dorr and Olmsted wanted to construct through the Tarn Valley. Partly because of summer residents' belief that the proposed road down the valley would destroy the untamed quality of the region around Picket Mountain and to the south of the Tarn near the Beehive, Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted were dissuaded from this route. "As you know," Rockefeller explained to Albright in 1934, "there has been discussion as to whether the road should go south through the gorge and over the mountain near the Beehive, which route the Government approved, although it was bitterly opposed by some of the summer people." In lieu of this, Rockefeller concluded, the route around Champlain Mountain was "from every point of view the better route."<sup>76</sup>

Yet the wilderness opposition of summer residents alone most probably would not have persuaded Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted to abandon the route down the Tarn Valley. It was only when this opposition was combined with the actions of local-year round residents in support of the road project, specifically the municipal relinquishment of the old section of Ocean Drive, that the community debate on Mount Desert Island reached a critical point necessary to change the final layout of the road through the Sieur de Monts region. In a letter to Cammerer in 1931, Dorr admits as much. "The Town's road-transfer to the park clears the way for any future carrying out of Mr. Rockefeller's plan," Dorr noted. "It was the psychological moment."<sup>77</sup> Whereas the opposition of summer residents tended to push Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted away from a desire to run the Sieur de Monts Spring segment through wilderness of the Tarn Valley, the decision by year-round residents to relinquish Ocean Drive to the park persuaded the three to search for another route in order to link the Sieur de Monts section with Ocean Drive. The result of this debate between summer residents and year-round locals was the rerouting of the segment around Champlain Mountain near the Beaver Dam Pond.

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<sup>76</sup>Rockefeller to Albright, 18 August 1934, folder 1099, box 110, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>77</sup>Dorr to Cammerer, 31 July 1931, folder 1202, box 119, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

Both summer and year-round residents affected the route of the Sieur de Monts motor road segment of the Park Loop Road. What had begun as a route dispute between Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted ultimately became a community-wide debate between summer and year-round residents. This community debate, moreover, had roots not only in the controversy surrounding the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake motor road, but also in the "car war" of 1909. Then, as in 1930, summer residents saw roads and the automobiles that drove upon them as a direct threat to the island's wild beauty and thus to their respite from the city. Some also interpreted Rockefeller's actions with respect to his road plans as undemocratic in that they failed to inform the community at large. Local year-round residents, on the other hand, much like their logger and farmer ancestors, viewed the roads proposed by Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted differently. For them these new roads symbolized economic potential during one of the gravest national depressions in United States history. They desperately needed tourist dollars traveling down their roadways. It is perfectly understandable, then, that businessmen from the Bar Harbor Board of Trade organized the campaign to persuade Rockefeller to rescind the withdrawal of his \$4 million donation. While these competing visions concerning road use went back to the rise of the automobile during the turn of the century, they were also having a direct impact on the future of Acadia National Park's motor road system.

#### THE OCEAN DRIVE AND OTTER POINT SEGMENTS

The influence on Acadia's motor roads of forces beyond the control of Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted did not end with the compromised layout of the Sieur de Monts segment, but continued as their vision of a Park Loop Road was pieced together on the perimeter of Mount Desert Island. This is again evident in the third stage of motor road development, when the southern portion of Ocean Drive and the Otter Point segments, including the Otter Creek Cove Causeway, were constructed. During this stage, it was not summer residents nor year-round locals who most affected the shape of these motor roads. Rather, due to the Depression the three men invited yet another cultural entity to join in dramatically influencing the motor roads of Acadia National Park.

#### *Presenting the Ocean View*

The southern part of Ocean Drive and the Otter Point segments comprise the southeastern section of the Park Loop Road. Beginning just north of Sand Beach, these segments hug the eastern coastline of Mount Desert Island. Like most of the park's carriage and motor roads, both present the motorist with a spectacular sequence of scenic ocean experiences. The motorist first passes Sand Beach, then Thunder Hole, and finally

approaches Otter Cliffs and its impressive stone grade separation. Here two lanes of traffic were intentionally separated onto different levels in order to give unobstructed views of the Atlantic Ocean. The grade separation also includes a third, lower tier which allows hikers along the Ocean Drive Path to view the ocean without encountering motor traffic. The motor road then circles the edge of Otter Point, working its way back up along the edge of Otter Creek Cove which it crosses on the gently curving Otter Creek Cove Causeway.

Construction on these segments began in 1933, soon after the Sieur de Monts debate was resolved, and was completed in four phases by 1939.<sup>78</sup> The first two phases involved the southern section of Ocean Drive. Here in 1933 workers first completed a 2,300' portion running south from Thunder Hole, where in 1929 Rockefeller had built a short demonstration piece in order to illustrate the road's potential, to Otter Cliffs. Construction then proceeded north of Rockefeller's demonstration road to Sand Beach. The Sand Beach section was completed in August 1934. As with all the roads he funded, Rockefeller was closely involved in the planning of the southern Ocean Drive segment. Worried that motorists would park alongside the road and thus obstruct the ocean view, he asked Olmsted and Dorr to include parking lots set back from the road. Six such lots were built.

The next two stages in the construction of this southern portion of the Park Loop Road involved the Otter Point segment with its Otter Cliffs grade separation, and the Otter Creek Cove Causeway. Rockefeller asked Olmsted to design the Otter Cliffs grade separation, which was completed in August 1936, as well as the road running around Otter Point. The Otter Creek Cove Causeway, which Olmsted also helped design, was constructed in 1939. Rockefeller's praise for the Causeway is indicative of his enthusiasm for the entire southern portion of the Park Loop Road. "The Otter Creek Inlet Causeway and Motor Road around the Black Woods has just been opened and is more beautiful and successful than I had even dared to hope it would be," he wrote to Olmsted. "The causeway looks as if it had always been there, so naturally is it related to the surrounding country, while the curve only adds to its beauty."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>The entire length of Ocean Drive took almost thirty years to construct because much of its proposed route ran across privately owned property. As the park acquired this property, more pieces of Ocean Drive were added.

<sup>79</sup>Cited in Foulds, 46.

### *The Great Depression and the "New Deal"*

The Great Depression hit Mount Desert Island just as severely as it struck other communities throughout the nation, perhaps even more so. Because leisure-time expenses were often the easiest to reduce, many Americans simply went without vacations and economies based on tourism like that of Mount Desert Island were severely affected. The Depression, however, hit summer as well as year-round residents on the island. Even Rockefeller's enormous family fortune failed to escape the 1930s unscathed. Whereas before the stock market crash of October 1929 the family's net worth was estimated at nearly \$1 billion, by 1935 it had been reduced to less than \$500 million, and four years later stood at approximately \$291 million.<sup>80</sup> It is understandable, then, that as the Depression continued Rockefeller became less enthusiastic about being the sole benefactor of Acadia's motor roads. "I am just wondering," he wrote to Park Service Director Cammerer in 1934, "whether there is any possibility of getting from the Administration of Public Work Fund (sic) . . . funds for the construction of the continuation of the motor road in Acadia Park which I have planned."<sup>81</sup> Similar requests from Rockefeller followed.

While Rockefeller's desire and ability to finance the construction of Acadia's motor roads began to wane in the early 1930s, the federal government was beginning to look for ways to ease the economic hardship of its more than fifteen million unemployed citizens. In 1933, many of President Roosevelt's "New Deal" programs were passed into law, including the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Civilian Conservation Corps. While these programs helped millions of Americans by putting many of them back to work, the New Deal also affected the motor roads of Acadia by making these work projects and federal funds available to national parks for motor road construction.

### *The Civilian Conservation Corps and Ocean Drive*

When the federal government established the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933, park superintendent George Dorr immediately recognized an opportunity for inexpensive labor and applied for two CCC camps in Acadia. The 154th Company of the CCC was established on McFarland Hill in May 1933 on the site of the present-day park headquarters. The other Acadia company, known as Camp 158, was stationed on the south shore of Long Pond on the west side of Mount Desert Island. Dorr designed work projects for

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<sup>80</sup>Cited in Foulds, 31.

<sup>81</sup>Rockefeller to Cammerer 16 January 1934, cited in Foulds, 46.

both camps in his "Acadia Expansion Program," which specified the construction of park trails, fire breaks, and campgrounds by CCC workers. Rockefeller too was intimately involved in directing CCC work in Acadia National Park, especially as it related to his motor road construction.<sup>82</sup>

The CCC's influence on the motor roads of Acadia is most evident along the southern portion of Ocean Drive. Here CCC workers built the Ocean Drive Trail from Sand Beach past Otter Point, working directly alongside Rockefeller's work crews who were simultaneously laying out Ocean Drive. The two sets of workmen shared construction materials, with CCC laborers paving the trail with excess debris from the Ocean Drive site. "The CCC laborers with which the work is being done are doing much better than when I last wrote you," explained S. F. Ralston, Rockefeller's estate superintendent, "and are taking care of our surplus material as fast as we can deliver it."<sup>83</sup> Although the quality of CCC labor was considered shoddy when this work project began in 1933, two years later as the Ocean Drive Trail was completed Rockefeller boasted to Cammerer that "the work on the path along the Ocean front, which has been done under the Park landscape men with CCC labor, is well designed and well executed. It is on par with the excellent path work done on Cadillac Mountain a year ago."<sup>84</sup>

Along with the Ocean Drive Trail, CCC enrollees also performed other less obvious detail work on Ocean Drive. The granite curbing in many of the parking lots along the road and much of the original fencing around sites such as Thunder Hole were constructed by CCC labor. Park signs which resembled local island sign posts were also designed and built by CCC workers, although today none of them remain.<sup>85</sup>

#### *Otter Point and the Naval Radio Station*

Located on one of the most northeasterly points along the United States' Atlantic coastline, the Otter Point Naval Radio Station was built during World War I in order receive radio signals from the European front. At the time, it was considered one of the

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<sup>82</sup>Connee Jellison, "CCC Left Permanent Mark on Mount Desert Island," *Ellsworth [ME] American*, 1986, ACAD Library.

<sup>83</sup>S. F. Ralston to Rockefeller 26 November 1933, folder 1201, box 119, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>84</sup>Rockefeller to Cammerer, 9 August 1934, folder 124, box 127, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>85</sup>Foulds, 87, 94-94.

most important receiving stations in the world.<sup>86</sup> By 1930, however, the site was also an essential ingredient in the park's comprehensive motor road plan. Rockefeller, Dorr and Olmsted were determined to run the Park Loop Road around Otter Point in order to afford motorists some of the finest ocean views on the island. "The Otter Creek station," as *The Bar Harbor Times* noted in November of 1932, "sits in the path of the proposed road, and has been one of two big barriers between plans and reality."<sup>87</sup>

In order to clear away this barrier and thus realize the plans of Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted, it was necessary for the federal government to become involved, much like summer and year-round residents had become involved during both the Jordan Pond-Eagle Lake and Sieur de Monts Spring motor road controversies. The first step was taken in the fall of 1932 when the Navy and the Department of the Interior began investigating the possibility of relocating the radio station. Although Gorham Mountain and Bass Harbor were rejected as possible sites, extensive testing found nearby Schoodic Peninsula, which had recently been added to Acadia National Park, to be suitable.<sup>88</sup> Hearings were then held in Washington and in November 1932 the Department of the Interior and the Navy agreed to move the station to Big Moose Island at Schoodic's southern end.

Rockefeller, Dorr, and Olmsted were therefore able to move forward with their proposal for the Park Loop Road around Otter Point. The result for the motorist was a series of spectacular ocean and inland views. "I can see that if this line were followed and the high bank upon which the Radio Station building stands cut down as you suggest," wrote Rockefeller to Olmsted in 1934, "that view of the Inlet would be materially improved."<sup>89</sup> As *The Bar Harbor Times* reported, the only reason banks like this

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<sup>86</sup>"Prospects for the Construction of \$4,000,000 Gift Highway Brighter as Capitol Agrees on New Station Site," *Bar Harbor Times*, 30 November 1932. See also "Fabbri Memorial Dedicated with Impressive Rites," *Bar Harbor Times*, 31 August 1939.

<sup>87</sup>"Move to Schoodic Point Now Being Discussed at Capitol," *Bar Harbor Times*, 9 November 1932.

<sup>88</sup>Sargent Collier, *Mt. Desert Island and Acadia National Park: An Informal History* (Camden, ME: Down East Books, 1978), 128.

<sup>89</sup>Rockefeller to Olmsted, 11 August 1934, folder 7, RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

could be cut down was because "Washington [had] come through with its bit of public service."<sup>90</sup>

*The Bureau of Public Roads Builds the Otter Creek Cove Causeway*

The federal government became even more directly involved in shaping the motor road system of Acadia National Park in 1936 when it agreed to fund the construction of the Otter Creek Cove Causeway. Rockefeller had first studied such a project in 1925 when he hired the White Engineering Company to make estimates for a replacement bridge across the cove. These plans, however, soon became mired in the public controversy surrounding the Sieur de Monts segment and the announcement of Rockefeller's comprehensive motor road plan.<sup>91</sup> By 1936 the Depression had also left Rockefeller less enthusiastic about funding the project alone.

In 1937, however, the National Park Service appropriated \$500,000 for the construction of the Otter Creek Cove Causeway and a nearby section of the Park Loop Road. Although pleased, Rockefeller nevertheless refused to relinquish full control over the project to the Bureau of Public Roads, which handled major road construction projects for the National Park Service, and at his own expense hired Olmsted to draw up plans for the Otter Creek Cove Causeway. After surveying the site, Olmsted concluded the causeway should be sharply curved to give the appearance of following the natural sandbar upon which the structure rested.<sup>92</sup>

The involvement of the federal government, however, again altered the plans of Rockefeller and Olmsted concerning Acadia's motor roads. Arguing that a curved causeway could only be attained through sharp, broken-back curves which would necessitate difficult maneuvering by motorists, the Bureau of Public Roads proposed an alternative design. Bureau engineers prescribed a far more gradual line crossing the causeway on a continuous curve of approximately 500' radius. After they convinced Olmsted, Olmsted himself met with Rockefeller in November 1935 and secured his acquiescence to these revisions.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>"Prospects for the Construction of \$4,000,000 Gift Highway Brighter as Capitol Agrees on New Station Site," *Bar Harbor Times*, 30 November 1932.

<sup>91</sup>Foulds, 45-46.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 2; Olmsted to Rockefeller, 27 November 1935. RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, 2; Olmsted to Rockefeller, 27 November 1935. RG 9138, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress.

*The Influence of Washington*

During the Depression, Rockefeller, Dorr and Olmsted increasingly found themselves working with the federal government to realize their comprehensive motor road plan. This was especially true of the Ocean Drive and Otter Point segments in the southeastern portion of the park. Their construction crews also found themselves working alongside government laborers such as the CCC enrollees who built the Ocean Drive Trail. Rockefeller, Dorr and Olmsted even encouraged their engineers to share materials with government projects. Through such sharing, however, their comprehensive motor road plan was altered, even if to a lesser degree than it had been by summer and year-round residents during the Sieur de Monts road controversy. The CCC, for instance, altered the trails and parking lots along Ocean Drive, while the involvement of the Bureau of Public Roads altered the view along Otter Point and the curve of the Otter Creek Cove Causeway. Along with summer and year-round residents, then, the federal government also had a hand in shaping the motor road system of Acadia National Park.

**THE PARADISE HILL ROAD**

The Paradise Hill Road marks the fourth and final stage in the development of the Acadia motor road system. It was also the last road built in the park, and therefore represents the fulfillment of an idea begun by Rockefeller, Dorr and Olmsted. As with the motor roads running from Jordan Pond to Eagle Lake, through the Sieur de Monts Spring area, and around Otter Point, cultural factions beyond these three men's control affected the construction of Paradise Hill Road. Here too summer and year-round residents, as well as the federal government, shaped the final route. But the building of Paradise Hill Road also represents the impact of visitors. These new constituents, who would play an increasingly important role within all national parks in the post-war period, now began affecting the construction of roads in Acadia.

*Completing the Loop*

The 3.5-mile Paradise Hill Road serves primarily as an approach route to the Park Loop Road. It begins at Eden Street near Halls Cove and parallels that road at a higher elevation as it climbs Paradise Hill. After crossing Duck Brook, Paradise Hill Road turns west and follows the slope of Sunset Hill and Great Hill, affording excellent panoramas of Bar Harbor and Frenchman Bay. A grade separation on Paradise Hill before the road crosses Duck Brook allows north and southbound traffic to pass without



obstructing views from the other lane of Frenchman Bay spread out below. The Paradise Hill Road joins up with the Park Loop Road near Great Pond Hill.

As early as 1930, Rockefeller and his engineer, Paul D. Simpson, discussed the construction of the Paradise Hill Road as a new entrance route to the park. Rockefeller directed Simpson to proceed with surveys for the road, most of which ran along property already owned by Rockefeller. In 1934 Rockefeller informed Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes of his desire to deed these lands to the government so that Paradise Hill Road could be built.<sup>94</sup> The Bureau of Public Roads began surveying the route in 1938, and construction began in December 1940. Although the road was completed in October of the following year, appropriations were insufficient for the construction of the three bridges which allow the road to cross over the Eagle Lake Road (Maine Route 233), the New Eagle Lake Road, and Duck Brook. Paradise Hill Road would remain unused until the bridges were completed eleven years later.<sup>95</sup>

#### *Visitation Create a Road*

As the Depression subsided and the country mobilized for World War II during the late 1930s, Americans again began enjoying their leisure time. Many began taking to the roads and driving north to Acadia. These motorists drove around the new Park Loop Road as well as down the streets of the islands' towns. Not surprising, Bar Harbor became increasingly congested with automobiles throughout this period. It was partially in response to this traffic problem that the federal government provided funding for the Paradise Hill Road project.

In his construction report, Bureau of Public Roads engineer Leo Grossman explained the reasons behind the construction of Paradise Hill Road. "The purpose of the road covered by this report," Grossman wrote in 1941, "is to form a direct connection to this loop system from the State Highway system bypassing the congested streets of Bar Harbor."<sup>96</sup> Rockefeller also admitted that traffic concerns were partially responsible for this new

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<sup>94</sup>Paul D. Simpson to Rockefeller, 2 January 1931, folder 4, box 1, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>95</sup>Foulds, 50.

<sup>96</sup>Federal Works Agency, Public Roads Administration, "Final Construction Report: Acadia National Park, Paradise Hill Road, Project 10A1," 29 October 1941, cited in Foulds, 51.

park entrance and was well aware of the community divisions that such a road might engender. "There would be reasons why an entrance nearer Hull's Cove would be desirable quite aside from topographical conditions and particularly from the point of view of tourists," he explained to Cammerer in 1938. "This would mean that they would turn into the park before they had really gotten well into the residential section of Bar Harbor which would, I presume, be appreciated by the summer people but regretted by the winter residents and summer storekeepers."<sup>97</sup> While motor tourists were to a great extent responsible for the construction of Paradise Hill Road, the community forces including summer and year-round residents that had affected earlier projects were still very much evident.

Construction of Paradise Hill Road, however, was not the only example of the impact of visitors on Acadia's motor road system. During this same period, and to an even greater extent after World War II, the park's roads were being reshaped to accommodate an increasing number of tourists. By the 1960s, for example, park officials became aware of a hazardous traffic situation at the Paradise Hill overlook in which inbound motorists continually crossed against traffic in order to take in the view of Frenchman Bay. To correct this situation the Bureau of Public Roads decided to separate the road into two one-way sections and provide parking on the upper grade separation to eliminate the crossing hazard.<sup>98</sup> Other instances in which visitors affected the park's motor roads included a 1969 decision to change the Park Loop Road to a one-way road. According to park superintendent John M. Good, "dramatic increase in traffic on Ocean Drive, combined with inadequate parking facilities at heavy use areas, have made the one-way flow necessary."<sup>99</sup>

During the construction of the Paradise Hill Road, each of the cultural elements that had affected many of the park's other motor roads were evident. For instance, while Rockefeller again donated the land for the road and the federal government built it, summer and year-round residents were also active in

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<sup>97</sup>Rockefeller to Cammerer, 20 October 1938, Folder 1151, Box 114, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

<sup>98</sup>Federal Works Agency, Public Roads Administration, "Final Construction Report: Acadia National Park Project 10A8, Paradise Hill Grade Separation," (Arlington, VA: Bureau of Public Roads, Virginia District, Region 15), 1. ACAD Archives

<sup>99</sup>Untitled article, *Bar Harbor Times*, 29 May 1969.

influencing the decision to construct this segment. Their positions, however, were reversed, with summer residents supporting its construction because the road would keep motorists from their neighborhoods while local year-round residents opposed the road for channeling motor traffic away from the downtown Bar Harbor business district. Finally, park visitors and the traffic they brought to Mount Desert Island were actually the cause of the road's construction in the first place. In many ways, the Paradise Hill Road in Acadia signifies the ultimate evolution of the park's motor road system.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF ACADIA'S PUBLIC ROADS

The dedication ceremony atop Cadillac Mountain deceptively simplifies the story behind the development of Acadia's motor road system. Dorr and Rockefeller, who symbolically opened the road with a snip of their scissors in 1932, should not be viewed as solely responsible for either the Cadillac Mountain Road or Acadia's other motor road projects. Nor should the cheering crowd, marching band, and numerous speeches which mention the community's "unflagging support" for the new road be taken at face value. Rather, as an examination of the park's road development illustrates, it was community debate, not community solidarity, that ultimately determined the final shape of the park's motor road system. Moreover this community debate did not begin with the establishment of Sieur de Monts National Monument in 1916. Rather its roots lie in a much earlier period, when during the 1880s tourists began coming to Mount Desert to escape the city and enjoy the island's isolated beauty. Thus the wilderness concerns of summer residents along with the economic worries of year-round locals, as well as the federal government and visitors to the park itself, all influenced the evolution of Acadia's Park Loop motor road, making it a public road in the truest sense.

Much to his credit, Rockefeller came to accept the involvement of external forces in his motor road projects. "The people who are opposing the road program are conscientious, high-minded people who believe they are rendering the community a real service," he wrote his friend Serenus Rodick in 1931. "They are as much entitled to their view as are those on the other side, and should be treated with the same neighborly courtesy and respect."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Rockefeller to Rodick, 13 February 1931, folder 1139, box 113, RG 2, OMR, Rockefeller Family Archives, RAC.

Such acceptance is yet another example of his generosity. However Rockefeller was also concerned with the divisiveness that such community involvement engendered. "It would be most unfortunate," he concluded in his letter to Rodick, "to have further bitterness developed or to have continued the bitterness which has already been created."<sup>101</sup>

Yet such bitterness is exactly the price that Rockefeller, Dorr and the communities of Mount Desert Island had to pay for their park roads. Without such community debate the entire Park Loop Road would have been more a product of a single group and therefore less acceptable to the majority of islanders and citizens visiting the park as well. The speeches at the Cadillac Mountain Road dedication ceremony which praised both Rockefeller and Dorr for their role in democratizing Acadia National Park were also misleading. Long before these two men decided to build motor roads, the automobile had already begun opening up the park to American citizens. The true democratic process is exactly this bitterness expressed by various social factions as well as the subsequent compromise concerning each segment of the park's motor roads.

Marching bands, cheering crowds, and supportive speeches are not the most fitting symbols for either the dedication of the Cadillac Mountain Road or for the development of Acadia's motor road system as a whole. They tend to conceal the true cultural legacy of Acadia's motor road system. Instead, the clouds that interrupted the dedication atop Cadillac Mountain and forced the ceremony to adjourn to the Malvern Hotel are perhaps more fitting. They, at least, suggest the often stormy dialogue surrounding the evolution of Acadia's motor road system.

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

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